

Idaho Trade Token Newsletter

Boise, Idaho

September, 1997

Volume 1, Number 9

News

Last month, I got the newsletter out just before leaving for Spokane to pick up my daughter from a debate camp at Gonzaga University. On the way I spent some time in Moscow and Pullman, mainly at the two university libraries there. While in Moscow, I called Harold Hahn, who has been collecting tokens for many years. Welcome to the list, Harold!

The Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections room of the Holland Library at Washington State University holds the business archives of the Spokane Brewing and Malting Company, and their affiliated companies, the Henco Brewery and the New York Brewery. This is a wonderful resource, and I have only scratched the surface of the Spokane B. & M. archives as it covers some 70 feet of shelf space. In about five hours, I went through their file of incoming correspondence for the year 1905. It included letters of application for jobs, bills from plumbers for fixing things in the brewery and in various saloons primarily in Spokane, etc., etc. The most interesting items for me were letters from saloon keepers within perhaps a 150-mile radius of Spokane. They ordered beer, asked for credit due to stiff competition or slow trade, complained about spoiled beer, and requested new beer pumps. Many of them wrote on nice letterheads (I suspect the first thing a fellow did when he started business was to have a letterhead printed so he looked successful), but a few scratched out notes on lined paper.

I also went through a part of a "letter book" covering 1905-06, but it was very difficult to use. In recent terms, they would be considered "carbon copies" of their outgoing letters; they used a different process, though, and I can't quite figure it out. The copies were on real flimsy, translucent material like onionskin. Handwritten letters were almost impossible to decipher, but in late 1905 the brewery invested in a typewriter and the purple ink on the copies was generally readable.

The archives also included ledger books, but I didn't get a chance to look at them. Hopefully they will be a good and condensed source of information on the customers of the breweries in Spokane. It would sure be neat to find similar archives for the other breweries which distributed into Idaho, but I have never heard of such a resource.

A Great Time was had by All

At 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, July 26, Dean Rasmussen, Mike Fritz and his friend Elby Thompson, Greg Manos, Ron Haberman, and I met at the Idaho Historical Museum in Boise. We loaded up my van and headed on our tour, starting with a couple of loops through downtown Boise looking at sites of token-issuing businesses. We headed out Warm Springs Avenue, stopping at the Natatorium, White City Park, and the Old Pen. Then around Table Rock to the site of Kelly's Hot Springs and Barber townsite. On the way up Highway 21 to Idaho City, we realized that we had forgotten to stop at a sandwich shop to get a lunch to take with us. Oh, well...

In Idaho City, we took in the visitor center and walked up Main Street to Wall Street past the Idaho World newspaper office and the Miner's Exchange Saloon building which later housed Weigell's Place and is now Boise County offices. We peeked in and saw probably the nicest backbar in any county recorder's office in the state. The Boise Basin Museum was just opening, so we went in and saw the handful of tokens in their display case and saw their historical video narrated by Tennessee Ernie Ford who had spent quite a bit of time in the Basin. Then we were off to the deli in the old Boise Basin Mercantile store. They were slow, but made a nice sandwich.

Back in the van we headed up the winding gravel road through Centerville to Placerville. Dean claimed it was the cheapest roller coaster ride he had been on for some time. There was quite a bit of traffic coming toward us, so we figured the estate sale in Placerville was a dud. When we got close to town, vehicles were parked in a solid line along the road. The closer we got, the more crowded it was. I let my riders out at the town square and went on through town to find a parking place. The square was crowded with people, there were two auctions going on, and there was stuff piled everywhere. What a crowd!



I found Sandy and Rudy Burns on the porch of the Magnolia Saloon (which is now the museum), and they directed me to where the tokens were. It was tough to examine them as they were inside a display case close to the auction action, but the others had thoroughly checked them out along with a banknote from Parma and a pair of 1914 Idaho gold pieces. I soon caught up with the others who were taking in the action. We found that the museum was closed because of the security issues with such a crowd, but, thinking that since

several of us had come such a long way to see it, we resolved to try for permission to go in. Mike went to the Craig store (from whence all the auction material came) and found a guy who appeared to be some sort of authority. It turns out that he was an EMT and was helping with the sale. He explained the reason for the museum being closed and said that the guy in charge of the museum had just left for a 40-year high school reunion or some such. Darn.

About then I spotted Dan Lute who was proudly carrying a nice original copy of Elliot's 1884 **History of Idaho Territory** which he had just bought. After milling around some more, Rudy came up to me with a business card from an acquaintance of his, June Davies, who has a business card business in Placerville. He told me that she was interested in history and would like to be added to my mailing list for this newsletter. Aha, thought I, perhaps another person associated with the museum who might be able to let us in. So Rudy and I went to the house where she was and we pleaded our case. She graciously agreed to trust Rudy with the keys, so we gathered up the group and went in with Rudy guarding the door. It wasn't a minute before he had to turn away would-be visitors, saying this was a "private opening". Soon the EMT fellow was back demanding an explanation of how we gained entry. Good for him, keeping an alert eye!

Shortly Sherry Hiner arrived at the door to keep an eye on us. She is one of the volunteers who keep the museum in first-rate shape. We introduced ourselves and explained our interest and had a nice visit with her as we finished seeing the museum. When we asked about the scarcity of tokens in the auction, she said that there were more which were going to be disposed of separately. Since a good percentage of the market for Idaho tokens was there, we offered to do whatever we could to facilitate that disposal, be it appraisal or purchase. I have subsequently written her and added her to the mailing list.

Next, several of us drove the short distance to the Placerville Cemetery where we visited the graves of numerous individuals prominent in Boise Basin history. It was remarkable to see gravestones for 4 or 5 different John Brogans; we think we identified the token-issuing one. Back at the auction, things were still moving slowly, so we continued milling around. It was getting even warmer as most of the shady spots were occupied.

Finally the tokens came up for bid, but designated-bidder Greg lost out to a Nampa dealer on the one he (or maybe it was Dean) wanted. Then the auctioneer put together a group of pieces including one of the Idaho "gold dollars" which he described as "not real gold-plated metal". Mike was convinced that they were the real thing, so he had Greg bid and won the lot. The next group of pieces had the other "gold dollar", but the auctioneer's helper dropped the piece in the grass. He said it was just the worthless piece which had been dropped, so he proceeded with the sale. Greg again got the lot for Mike, but the auction went forward instead of stopping to search for the piece. Down on his hands and knees looking for the piece in the grass, Mike stirred up the interest of a couple of little kids who crawled under the tables looking also. No luck, so he enlisted the help of Dan who had his metal detector along. Picture Dan on his knees, metal detector earphones on to hear above the auctioneer's loudspeakers, right under the auctioneer's stand. It turned out that the metal in the stand overpowered Dan's detector, and they wouldn't move the stand. So he had to wait until the auction moved on down the row of tables for them to move it. After they did, it didn't take Dan 30 seconds to come up with the piece!

By then it was after the time we were scheduled to meet at the Holiday Inn, so we headed back to Boise. Rudy and Sandy had left earlier, and Ron and Dan went back via the Harris Creek Road to Horseshoe Bend. The rest of us went down Grimes Creek to Highway 21.

At the Holiday Inn we found Rudy, Sandy, and Lloyd Libert. Soon we all had our "show and tell" stuff laid out and trading was started in earnest. Soon Robert Higdem showed up rounding out the total of ten collectors participating. Ron called for pizza to be brought in, but it quickly disappeared. We decided that we will hold a gathering next year in the Salmon area, with Dean coordinating the activities, tentatively scheduled for the weekend of July 18, 1998. Shortly it was midnight, and we had to adjourn, but we left agreeing that a truly great time was had by all.

The Magnolia Saloon

Those of us who took in the field trip really were able to step back in time when we entered the Magnolia Saloon. It is illustrated in Elliot's 1884 **History of Idaho Territory** pretty much as it stands today. Elliot stated that "The Magnolia is a fine building conducted by Jas. McKay". In reading the material submitted when the Placerville Historic District was placed in the National Register of Historic Places, I could not determine for sure that the building

was the original (perhaps a Placerville reader could confirm that point), or exactly when it was built.

At this point I have relatively few facts relating to the Magnolia, but here is what I know. James F. McKay was born in Ireland, came to Placerville and had built his saloon by 1884. He was elected to one term as Boise County Commissioner in 1894. Sometime between 1914 and 1916 ownership of the Magnolia transferred to Steve Meckin (or Mecklin). McKay contacted pulmonary tuberculosis in early 1917 and died from the disease in St. Alphonsus hospital in Boise on August 16, 1917, exactly 80 years before this writing. Meckin was the informant on McKay's death certificate and indicated that he was never married and left no close relatives. Meckin stated that McKay was 66 years old at the time of his death, having been born in June, 1851, however McKay reported that he was 56 in the 1910 census which would have made him 63 or 64. Services were held for McKay in the Placerville Catholic Church and he is buried in the town cemetery.



Presumably this 21mm brass piece was issued by McKay. It is the same on each side, and was probably good for a drink at the Magnolia Saloon. This maverick is listed as #PLA-1(A)



This 21mm aluminum token was issued after Steve Meckin took over the business. It reads:

MAGNOLIA / PLACERVILLE, / IDA.
GOOD FOR / 10¢ / IN TRADE / AT
STEVE'S

This one is listed as #PLA-1



Another maverick which has long been associated with this business, this 25mm aluminum piece is of similar diework to the previous piece and has been found in the area. It reads:

GOOD FOR / 10¢ / AT / STEVE'S / IN
TRADE
10

This one is listed as #PLA-2

Meckin was listed in the directories as retailing soft drinks in 1916 and 1918. Prohibition probably forced him into a less lucrative business and caused him to move on to greener pastures as I have found nothing more of him in Idaho. I did notice a nice calendar he issued in the Placerville museum. The Magnolia Saloon building opened as the Placerville Museum on July 4, 1973, but I do not know how it was used between 1918 and then. I will fill in more gaps in this story as I find information to share.

It's the Law!

Continuing from the 1891 Session Laws of Idaho, here is more of the liquor act:

SEC. 4. The amount to be paid by each applicant for such license shall be the sum of five hundred dollars per year, or a proportionate amount for each fraction of a year, in any city, town, village or hamlet, where, at the last general election next preceding the date of the application for license, the total vote for Governor exceeded one hundred and fifty votes, and three hundred dollars per year in all other cities, towns, villages or hamlets: *Provided*, That all persons engaged in retailing liquors in connection with a hotel or tavern, where meals and lodgings are furnished and kept in good faith for the entertainment of travelers at any point distant three miles or more outside of the limits of any city, town, village or hamlet, shall pay a license therefor of one hundred dollars per year, or a proportionate amount for each fractional part of a year: *And provided further*, That no license issued under the provisions of this act shall be for a less time than three months, and no license shall be granted for a longer period than one year.

SEC. 5. Any wife, mother, father, son, daughter or sister of a person who is a habitual drunkard, or in the habit of getting intoxicated, or the county commissioners, or the mayor of any city, or any county officer, may make complaint to any justice of the peace of the precinct where such person resides or may be staying, or to the probate judge of the county where such person resides or may be staying, alleging the name of such person, the fact of his being a habitual drunkard or in the habit of getting intoxicated, and the name or names of the person or persons from whom the person having such habit obtains his liquor, as such relative or officer believes, which complaint shall be verified by the person making the same; whereupon said justice of the peace or said probate judge shall issue a notice in writing to such person or persons so named, notifying him or them that no intoxicating liquors of any kind must be sold or given away by him or them, or at his or their place or places of business, to such person having such habit, and which notice must at once be served upon such person or persons as summons are served from justice courts. After the service of such notice, if any person or persons so notified shall sell, give away, or permit any person at his place of business to sell or give away, any intoxicating liquor to such person about whom he or they have received notice as aforesaid, his or their license to sell liquor shall, from that time, be deemed and held to be cancelled and annulled; and said person, and each of said persons, if more than one, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and be liable in a civil action brought in the name or for the benefit of the person making such complaint, in the sum of two hundred dollars for each offense, and the wife, if there be one, may bring such suit without uniting her husband as a party to the action.

SEC. 6. When any such person so licensed shall be convicted of a violation of any of the provisions of this act, or of any of the penal statutes of this State relating to the sale of intoxicating liquors, or shall violate any of the conditions of said bond hereinbefore provided for, the board of county commissioners may, and it is hereby made their duty, to revoke such license; but such revocation shall not be construed to discharge such licensee or his sureties for any damage sustained by, or right accrued to, any person prior to such revocation.

More to follow...

Meet Jim Mabry

Many of you have talked with or traded material with Idaho native Jim Mabry who is now living in Oregon. He wrote the following:

"I found it interesting that there were advertising "Good For" trade mirrors from two towns I had lived in as a young boy, Nampa and Caldwell, Idaho. So in the year 1972 I began collecting Good For mirrors from as many Idaho towns as I could get. In 1975 I got more interested in General Merchandise, Mercantile, and Grocery tokens, so I traded off the trade mirrors to get extremely rare examples of the tokens I was interested in.

"This interest came from history related to be by my Mother who remembered as a young child her father, Albert Mutch, traded at the Hay-Boone Grocery Company in Caldwell. She remembers that the two men who ran it for the Hay-Boone Company were named Kimbro and Southward. Albert Mutch was a farmer in the Riverside community south of Caldwell and got groceries on credit until harvest time, and probably used the tokens we know."

Jim has been able to obtain most of the classic rarities among Idaho mercantile tokens. He now also collects business college tokens and advertising paper notes and scrip.

Sticker Dollars

From the Idaho Falls Post Register (I forgot to note the date in late 1928):

Coin Stickers Illegal, Agent Tells Merchants

Don't do it no more. That is the warning Sherwood M. Anderson, Salt Lake City agent of the treasury department of the U. S. secret service issued to Idaho Falls merchants Wednesday in the placing of stickers on coins as advertisement for such events as the recent Dollar Day celebration held here.

"It is a violation of the law relating to the placing of advertising literature on the obligations of the government," he stated. "This is not the first time this has happened in Idaho Falls," the agent added, "and persons found placing tickers (sic) on coins are subject to prosecution in a federal court with a possible fine of five hundred dollars. If this practice is allowed to continue," he added, "it might aid in the passing of counterfeit coins since it hides the true nature of the money. It is hard to handle in banks and banks and business houses have forwarded many complaints," he adds.

Best regards,

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